

ACCESS AMERICA

Summer Camps for Kids and Teens

Safe places to grow, learn and explore during the summer.

Seeds of Peace Summer Camp

"I was not brainwashed, not at all. It was my soul that was washed to remove all the stereotypes, distrust, fear and hatred," Mohammad, a young Pakistani, told State Department officials and his Pakistani, Indian and Afghani peers after returning from the Seeds of Peace International Camp. He and his fellow South Asian campers shared stories of

how, in Mohammad's words, they "came to know the truth about," and even befriend, "the 'other side'" at camp.



Seeds of Peace is a nongovernmental, nonpolitical program that recruits students from conflict areas and brings them

together for six weeks of training in peacemaking and conflict resolution skills with students from the "other side" of the

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conflict. Students are chosen through a competitive process involving recommendations, essays and interviews.

At the Seeds of Peace camp in the state of Maine, students must work together to accomplish tasks and are encouraged to talk about the issues that divide their nations. They live together, share meals and engage in various summer camp activities, including playing sports, going

Seeds of Peace campers visit Washington, DC.

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From the Ambassador

Summer camps reflect the values of America. At camp, young people make new friends, often from different backgrounds, and learn new skills, from mountain-climbing to calculus. Camps offer young people a safe place to share ideas, explore new ways to understand the world and to just have fun. They are a mirror of America itself, diverse and reflecting our nation's many interests.

At their best, summer camps help build bridges between people. By encouraging sharing, diversity and team work, they bring people together across cultural, religious and racial lines. They allow them to work and play as a team on projects and games that build communications. They emphasize our common heritage. In this issue of Access America, we are pleased to bring you the story of such a program, "The Seeds of Peace Summer Camp." It is just one of many summer camps that help to educate America's and the world's young citizens and future leaders.

-Robert F. Godec

Seeds of Peace, cont'd from p. 1

through obstacle courses, and creating art projects.

Currently, Seeds of Peace hosts delegations from the Middle East, South Asia, Turkey and Cyprus, and the Balkans.

During a reception with Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South Asian Affairs John Gastright, hands filled the air. Students were eager to ask about U.S. policy on Kashmir, Iraq, additions to the U.N. Security Council and terrorism.

They also asked how the United States feels about Iran as a nuclear power and about allegations of prisoner abuse in Guantanamo Bay and Iraq.

Students looked forward to returning home to share their experiences but were reluctant to leave their friends -- friends and neighbors they had to travel halfway around the world to meet. The State Department has established an alumni Web site to allow the students to continue discussions online and keep in contact.

The Pakistani camper, Mohammad, concluded his comments with words that reflected the message carried by many involved with the program. He said, "We are warriors of hope, we are masters of understanding, we are pioneers of respect, we are soldiers of trust, we are leaders of tomorrow, we are seeds of peace."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

The Exchange Visitor Program and Summer Camps

Summer camps are as fundamentally American as apple pie and corn-on-the-cob. They offer young people a diverse variety of experiences from making new friendships across cultures to learning new skills and discovering new aptitudes. Summer camps in America offer new opportunities to students from throughout the world including the gifted and the disabled.

Children and teenagers take advantage of camps to hone their athletic, musical or other artistic skills as well as using the opportunity to learn new academic skills such as science, math or language. More exotic programs even cover topics such as space walking, mountain climbing and snake wrangling. Overnight camps allow children to bond together, developing close friendships as well as developing skills which build their independence such as leadership, negotiation and team-building. Summer camps can build self-esteem and provide youth with friendship, skills and memories that will last a lifetime.

The purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, which is administered by the Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. One of the groups for which this program applies is Camp Counselors. This program offers a way for Tunisians and others to become immersed in American culture as well as learn new skills. At the conclusion of their program Exchange Visitor participants are



Shakaib Akbari who went to summer camp & two participants of the National Youth Science Summer Camp

IRC Tips

Listed below are web sites to help you learn more about American summer camps and culture courtesy of our friends in the Information Resource Center.

www.acacamps.org

The American Camping Association's Camp Search.

www.esl-lab.com/

English practice story and questions about summer camping; esl-lab site under "General Listening Quizzes" under the difficult category.

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/summercamp/article4.html>

A kids site related to packing for camp

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/summer_camp

For an explanation of the concept; search summer camp at the Wikipedia site.

<http://usinfo.state.gov/pub/ejournalusa.html>

Journal for youth: This month's title "World Youth Building a Future."

www.seedsofpeace.org/program/camp

The Seeds of Peace program as referred to in the article.

August Events

All these events take place at the American Corner

All Month's Special Topics:

August 10th at 10:00 am: Financial Aid (undergrad)

August 17th at 10:00 am: Financial Aid (Grad)

August 22nd, 10:00 am-1:00 pm: Application Package

August 24th at 10:00 am: Business Studies in US

August 31st at 10:00 am: Engineering Studies

All Month: Fridays 3:30-5:00: Free English Friday's

American Corner at AMIDEAST

22, Rue Al Amine al Abassi, Cite des Jardins, 1002 tunis-Belvedere, tel. 71-790-563 ext. 106

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expected to return to their home countries to utilize the experience and skills they have acquired while in the United States.



Camp Counselors interact directly with American youth by overseeing their activities in a camp setting during the U.S. summer season. Non-counseling chores may be an occasional part of camp life; however, program participants do not serve as "staff" — including (but not limited to) administrative personnel, cooks, or menial laborers such as dishwashers or janitors. Foreign university students, youth workers, and other specially qualified individuals at least 18 years of



age and proficient in English may work as counselors in U.S. Summer camps for up to four months under the exchange visitor program.

For further information on the exchange visitor program see http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#1.

Alumni Spotlight

Name: Imene Bouteraa

Program: Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA)

Program Dates: 2006 - 2007

Home in Tunisia: Ez-Zahra

Home in the U.S.: Jonesboro, Arkansas



Your fondest memory of being in the U.S.: It is hard to choose a specific event and refer to it as my fondest memory because every day has its own memories but visiting New York City, Manhattan is my best memory from my stay in the United States. Given my interest in Modern Art, I consider the opportunity I had to visit the Modern Art Museum, one of the most special gifts I have ever had.

Advice for someone thinking about going on the program: I advise all those thinking about participating in the program to be an Ambassador for their country and culture and to open up to the American culture. I am sure there will be a lot to learn through this intersection and try to live fully the experience and to make it a life time experience.

What you miss most in the U.S.: To have the chance to be proud and confident about one's dreams and ideas. To believe in who you are and your ability to be the difference and create the difference.

The experience: I stayed on my own in an off-campus apartment. My apartment was within a walking distance from campus. Arkansas State University is a relatively big campus with different colleges and many activities going on. That I come from a Muslim background was not an obstacle to integrate and my friends learned more about Islam and its religious tolerance. I spent quite a long time in my office preparing material for my class and in the library reading books related to my thesis project. My best memory was eating out Thanksgiving Day at my student's and my friend's place. My time in the United States, either on or off campus, on my own or with friends will always be a lifetime experience about which I will always be nostalgic.

Closer to Home

The Language Village in Tunisia

For the past two summers the U.S. Department of State has helped support the language village at Mrezgra which offers opportunities for Tunisian English majors to become fully immersed into the English language in a two-week program that incorporates a group of ten native english speaking students provided by AMIDEAST and two Embassy provided "English Language Fellows." Additionally this year we supported the program with an American English Language Specialist.

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**The global
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The American Center

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